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AUTHOR Villeme, Melvin G.
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ABSTRACT

Working on the assumption that teacher educators should develop attitudes in education majors that are consistent with the philosophy of most educators today, this study tried to ascertain if there is a change in attitudes in the direction of accepted educational philosophy as a result of taking the course "Introducti to Teaching." The course at the University of South Florida is an elective open to any freshmen on a pass-fail only basis; it emphasizes tutoring experiences and group discussions. The Minnesota Teacher Attitude Inventory was the instrument used to measure the attitudes of the students. The results indicated that there was a significant change in attitudes over the period of the course. Limitations of this study relate to the permanency of the changed attitudes and the lack of a control group of freshman not taking the "Introduction to Teaching" course. But the study did suggest that changes of attitudes were taking place in a short time span. A follow-up study is warranted to suggest if particular methods do make a difference in attitude changes. (JA)

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Attitude Changes in Introduction to Teaching Classes

by Melvin G. Villems

ED 079251

Statement of Problem

Developing positive attitudes toward the child and principles of learning is one of the basic objectives of most education courses. Jacobs' findings have indicated that attitudes are not affected by a course or courses designed for this purpose. On the other hand, Hoover[2] did get significant attitude changes from students taking an Introduction to Education class, using the semantic differential method developed by Osgood and associates.

One of the main objectives of EDC 101, (Introduction to Teaching) at the University of South Florida is to help develop attitudes toward teaching that are consistent with the philosophy of most educators today. Shaffer and Shoben have illustrated this philosophy in the following way:

> Public opinion and the judgment of educational philosophers agree that the most significant results of education are the generalized learning and attitudes that enable a person to attack his life problems successfully; rather than the specific skills and bits of information that he acquires. The schools responsibility is not limited to intellectual training. The child comes to school as a whole and it is impossible to separate his intellectual functions from his emotional and his personal social adjustments. [3]

Ryan and Cooper express their feeling about attitudes and their affect on teacher behavior:

> A persons attitudes, or predispositions to act in a positive or negative way, toward persons, ideas and events are a fundamental dimension of his personality. Although little empirical evidence exists relating specific attitudes to teaching effectiveness, almost all educators are convinced of the importance of teacher attitudes in the teaching process. Attitudes have a direct though frequently unrecognized effect on our behavior in that they determine the ways we view ourselves and interact with others.[4]

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The problem then was to ascertain if, in fact, there is a change in attitudes in the direction of accepted educational philosophy as a result of taking a course in "introduction to teaching."

Description of class and Methods used in class

"Introduction to teaching" at the University of South Florida is an elective course open to any freshman in the University. Although any freshman can enroll in this class, most students enrolled are definitely planning to go into teaching or are at least considering teaching as a possible vocational goal. There are usually seventy-five to one hundred students enrolled in each section and it is team taught.

The course is taught on a pass-fail only basis and is organized in the following way: Students in the class are divided into ten to twelve groups at random. During the quarter, each group is responsible for developing a T. V. skit on some aspect of education. Each group is also responsible for developing an effective means of presenting some issue in education to the total class. Every individual in the class must tutor at least ten times with a student in the public schools and he must keep logs on his progress. The large class discussions are used for presenting T. V. productions and issues, showing films, and discussions by students reacting to the issues, films or productions. The class is broken up into two smaller discussion groups once a week and each professor discusses tudoring experiences, reactions to issues brought up in the large groups and other topics in education that the students want to talk about. The students also write three reaction papers during the quarter concerning an issue or a film that has been shown.

It can be seen from the above brief description that the focus is on students developing their own ideas about education rather than learning a specific body of knowledge.

Instrumentation

The Minnesota Teacher Attitude Inventory was the instrument used to measure attitudes of students. This inventory consists of one hundred and fifty statements in five areas: children's moral status, discipline problems, principles of child development, principles of education administration, and teachers' personal reaction to children. Subjects who take the inventory respond to each item on a five step scale: Strongly Agree, Agree, Uncertain, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. Weights are empirically assigned to the five response categories and a single total score is devised for each subject by adding the weights of the one hundred and fifty items. A high score indicates that the subject holds attitudes that are associated with teacher-pupil rapport.

Procedure

The research involved the application of a one group Pretest-Postest Design.[5] The Minnesota Teacher Attitude was administered to two classes (one hundred and thirty-five students) of Introduction to Teaching at the second class meeting of each section. The students were not asked to indicate their names so that the results will not be as prone to reflect attitudes that are expected by the instructors. The inventory was administered at the last class meeting of the above mentioned classes. The students were assured at both testings that the results would not in any way be associated back to individuals in the class. Since this was a pass-fail class where students' already knew they were passing, it is assumed that students did not respond in a way that they thought would please the instructors.

The degree of change from the pre test to the post test was tested by using the t-test for correlated samples.

Table 1

	N	Pre test Mean	SD	Post test Mean	SD	Mean of Difference Scores	
MTAI	135	29.547	28.211	37.904	28.464	8.357	t=5.729*

*Significant at the .001 level

Results

As indicated in Table 1, pre to post test changes on the M. T. A. T. was significant at the .001 level.

Discussion

As inspection of the results indicated that there was a significant change in attitudes over the period of the course in "Introduction to Teaching". Emphasis throughout the course in all discussions and activities was for the students to develop his own ideas toward education and children rather than forcing any ideas on the students. Since some studies indicate that change of attitudes across the short period of time of a course or sequence of courses, does not occur, it may be that the methods used does make a difference.

One of the greatest limitations of this study relates to the permanency of the changed attitudes. Another problem pertains to the possible use of a control group of freshmen in other courses to see if the same kind of change is occuring without taking "Introduction to Teaching".

Despite the limitations, the study did suggest that changes of attitudes were taking place in a short time span. Therefore, a follow up study on different classes of Introduction to Teaching and the possible use of a control group could help determine if particular methods do make a difference in attitude changes.

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